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ABSTRACT

Thirty-eight mothers of educable mentally retarded (EMR) children and eight teachers of EMR classes participated in an investigation of the relationships between two instruments that might be used by the special class teacher with parents of EMR children, and another instrument to assess teacher attitudes. The mothers were administered the Parent Child Rating Scale (PCRS) and the Attitude Toward Handicapped Individuals (ATHI) scale, while the teachers completed the Teacher Rating Scale (TRS). No statistically significant or high correlations were found among the three instruments, and it was concluded that the ATHI, PCRS, ano TRS all measure rather different dimensions of parental and teacher attitudes toward a child's school behavior and acceptance of handicapped individuals. (LS)

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PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE HANDICAPPED

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Special education like the rest of education per se is haunted by the growing number of attitude instruments being developed for use in the special classroom by both researchers and special educators. A problem resulting from such rapid growth has been the failure to correlate the newly developed devices with more mature ones that have some established degree of acceptable validity and reliability. Shaw and Wright (1967) have pointed out that attitude scales should not be used in isolation, but rather as part of a battery of scales if truly meaningful data is to be obtained about attitudes and instrument reliability and validity.

PURPOSE

This was a pilot study to investigate the relationships between two instruments that might be used by the special class teacher with parents of educable mentally retarded (EMR) children, and another instrument to assess teacher attitude. Since this was the first research effort utilizing these three instruments in this manner, the following three null hypotheses were investigated:

1. There would be no statistically significant relationship between the Parent Child Rating Scale (PCRS) and the Attitude Toward Handicapped Individuals (ATHI) scale.

2. There would be no statistically significant relationship between the ATHI and the Teacher Rating Scale (TRS).

3. There would be no statistically significant relationship between the TRS and PCRS.

Methods and Procedures

Subjects: The sample in this study consisted of 38 mothers of educable mentally retarded children in the special education program offered by the public schools in Denton, Texas. In addition to the mothers, 8 teachers of the EMR classes were given the TRS.

Procedures: Two scales, the ATHI and PCRS were administered to the mothers at home, while the teachers completed their instruments at school. All instruments were administered by the senior author over a two week period.

Instruments: The ATHI scale by Lazar (1973) is a modification of the Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons scale (ATDP) developed by Yuker and others (1966). The modification consisted of changing the term "disabled" to read "handicapped." The assumption being that "handicapped" is a much broader term than "disability," which is usually restricted in meaning to the physically disabled.

The ATHI is a 20 item instrument that has a possible score range from 0-120, a score of 70+ indicating normal acceptance of the handicapped (Lazar, 1973). Lazar and Denham (1974) reported a Pearson product moment correlation of .83 between the ATHI and ATDP. In another study using a Pearson product moment correlation, Stodden, Graves, and Lazar (1973) reported a correlation of .80 between the ATHI and ATDP. The latter study also found a coefficient of stability reliability of .73 using a test-retest after two weeks of separation between testing. The ATHI has each item rated on a six point Likert type scale as indicated below:

+ 3 I agree very much

+ 2 I agree pretty much

+ 1 I agree a little

- 1 I disagree a little

- 2 I disagree pretty much

- 3 I disagree very much

The Parent Child Rating Scale (PCRS) was developed by Lazar (1972) as a 60 item instrument that has 22 negative items and 38 positive items concerning the handicapped child and behavior at home, school, peers, and self-perceptions. An adjusted score is obtained by subtracting the negative scores from the positive scores, thus yielding a total corrected score. Each parent is asked to rate their child's behavior on the following five point scale:

1 - never

2 - rarely

3 - sometimes

4 - often

5 - always

It is assumed that the PCRS helps the parents identify and focus on specific concerns toward their child's school life and related attitudes toward school displayed in the home. Lazar (1972) points out that the identified data can be used to help counsel parents in general, and to serve specifically during parent-teacher meetings as a focal point for discussion, eliminating or reducing the amount of time wasted on small talk in such meetings.

Finally, the Teacher's Rating Scale (TRS) is a 27 item instrument developed by Hewett (1968) for use by the special class teacher. The child's behavior about school is rated on the following five point scale:

1 - never

2 - rarely

3 - sometimes

4 - often

5 - always

No published research was found using the TRS or the PCRS.

Results and Discussion

Pearson product moment correlations were computed to test the three null hypotheses. In Table 1 the means, standard deviations, and ranges of the scores are reported regarding the sample. Pearson product moment correlations are reported in Table 2. No statistically significant or high correlations were found between the three instruments used in this study. Thus, it appears that the ATHI, PCRS, and TRS all measure rather different dimensions of parental and teacher attitudes toward a child's school behavior and acceptance of handicapped individuals per se. Nor do the findings suggest that these instruments cannot be used in a diagnostic manner to obtain data upon which parents and special class teachers might focus upon during a parent-teacher conference.

The results do suggest that it would be of little value to replicate this study in terms of relationships between the three instruments. Further research is suggested to compare the attitudes of fathers and mothers paired on the ATHI and the PCRS.

This would allow for the study of how a mother and father see their child's school behavior and the extent of acceptance as would be measured by the ATHI. Finally the TRS might be used with teachers of different groups of exceptional children to see how they would focus on specific behaviors, i.e., EMR, LD, and ED. It is suggested that such additional research, along with the results of this study, might help teachers and parents gather data to facilitate a more realistic instructional program based upon child-parent needs.

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TABLE 1

N, MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND SCORE RANGES

Group	Instrument	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Range of Scores
Mothers	PCRS	38	93.07	27.29	34-144
Mothers	ATHI	38	74.94	16.20	45.109
Teachers	TRS	38	53.02	15.47	10-78

TABLE 2

CORRELATIONS FOR THREE INSTRUMENTS

Instruments	r	t	df	P
PCRS with ATHI	0.13	0.79	36	n.s.
ATHI with TRS	0.10	0.60	36	n.s.
PCRS with TRS	0.36	1.65	36	n.s.